



# Contact!

## WINTER 2004 ISSUE

**2004 Annual Reunion...** Our 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion will be held April 24, 2004 at the Sportsmen's Lodge Banquet Center in Studio City, California. Festivities will begin at 11:00AM with registration and a social/cocktail time, giving everyone a chance to catch up with each other since our last event. Lunch will then be served along with background music by Jerry Case and his orchestra. An interesting program is planned, anchored by our guest speaker Bill Rheams who comes to us all the way from New Orleans. Bill has done numerous speaking engagements and is known for his *Outrageous Airplane Stories*. He flew a B-17 in World War II and has since flown thousands of hours all over the world in dozens of aircraft types, primarily heavy, four to ten engine bombers and transport aircraft. Bill has spent a lifetime in aviation as a pilot, an airline consultant and as an owner of a couple of his own airlines. The afternoon will be topped off with some specially selected and unusual door prizes. Don't miss any of it. A Luncheon Reservation Form has been included with this newsletter. Fill it out and send it in right away, don't delay. For those coming from out of town, a block of rooms, at special APA Reunion rates, has been set aside at the Sportsmen's Lodge Hotel which is just adjacent to the Banquet Center. To book one or more of these rooms, call the hotel at (800) 821-8511, on or before March 26, 2004 and identify yourself as an Aviation Pioneers Reunion attendee. As is our usual custom, a Pre-Reunion Cocktail Party for all of the out-of towners, and anyone else that wants to come, will be held at the Sportsmen's Lodge Hotel at 6:30PM, Friday April 23, 2004. See the Luncheon Reservation Form for more details.

**Editors Notes...** The world's first scheduled airline flight took place on January 1, 1914. The St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line offered an 18 mile hop across Tampa Bay for \$5. As a precursor of what was to come in the scheduled airline industry, the Airboat Line didn't make any money and closed down after four months of operation. We also note that October 2003 marked the last flight of the Concorde, bringing an end to the era, at least for the foreseeable future, of commercial supersonic airline transport. Of a total of 20 Concorde's built, only 14 saw service, 7 each operated by Air France and British Airways. The Concorde could fly between

Paris or London and New York in half the time as a Boeing 747, but at a \$6300 one-way fare it was never a commercial success. After 27 years of operations all Concorde flights have ceased and the aircraft are now destined to be museum pieces. The presumed prestige benefit of flying the Concorde could simply no longer offset the financial drain from continued operations. The major airlines of the world, for their next generation of aircraft are now buying big, expensive (read prestigious), long range aircraft carrying 300 to 550 passengers such as the Boeing 777-200, the Airbus A340-500 and the soon to be introduced giant Airbus A-380. These big guys are going to be able to fly non-stop 9250 miles Chicago to Sydney or non-stop 9500 miles New York to Singapore. How about New York to Bangkok, 18 hours non-stop? These new generation aircraft may be capable of traveling that far and that long non-stop but there is no way the old generation passenger, like me, would undertake such an ordeal unless there were some really major changes in seating and cabin configuration and I don't even know what the airfare is yet. At the other end of the spectrum the commuter affiliates of the majors (now called regional airlines) are buying 50 to 100 seat regional jets from Embraer and Bombardier. These are the new generation of commuter aircraft. These aircraft will be operating what will now become "short haul" flights for the majors of up to 2000 miles such as Los Angeles to Denver, Austin to Chicago or New York to Miami. The regional jets I've been subjected to are noisy, with uncomfortable, narrow, thinly padded seats and have barely enough room for the passengers much less any room for carry on items which still must be checked with an attendant at the bottom of the ramp. With all of this, I think the Majors are going to continue their dry spell and that the future looks exceptionally bright for carriers like low fare, quick turnaround, no nonsense Southwest Airlines, with its fleet of 137 seat Boeing 737-700's, Jet Blue with its fleet of 156 seat Airbus A320's, and some of the new upstarts operating full size aircraft. That's my ramblings for this issue. I look forward to seeing many of you at the April 24th Reunion.

**Humor...** Why is it that we have to speak English? An officer in the U.S. Naval reserve was attending a conference that included admirals from both the U.S. Navy and the French Navy. At a cocktail reception, an American admiral found himself in a small group that included

personnel from both navies. The French admiral started complaining that whereas Europeans learned many languages, Americans learned only English. He then asked: "Why is it that we have to speak English in these conferences rather than you speak French?" Without hesitating, the American Admiral replied: "Maybe it's because the English speaking Brits, Canadians, Aussies and Americans arranged it so you would not have to speak German."

**2005 Annual Reunion...** Ruby Mercer has suggested we take a poll of the membership to see if there is any interest in holding our 2005 Annual Reunion in Palm Springs. Palm Springs has developed a first rate World War II Air Museum that would provide us with several hours of touring, banquet facilities, probably for dinner,



as well as an interesting speaker. The event would require at least a one night stay in the Palm Springs area. The Palm Springs Air Museum

displays one of the world's largest collections of flyable World War II warplanes; rare and original combat photography; original artworks, including enormous murals; artifacts, memorabilia, and uniforms of WW2; and, continuous video documentaries. But by far, the most important component of the Museum's presentations is not part of the collection, but is, instead, the living history and eyewitness accounts of the

hundreds of docents who volunteer their time to explain the exhibits. Many served and survived in air combat during World War II. They



are a priceless resource that is also a very finite asset of the institution. So you can be thinking about it, at our upcoming 2004 Reunion, we will be asking the attendees for an indication of interest. If you don't plan to attend this year's Reunion and you would be interested in going to Palm Springs in 2005, drop us a line.

**As told by Dick Neumann...** From old file pictures there are a couple of hangars at Burbank in the late 1930's inhabited by one Paul Mantz and his gas house gang of crazy movie flyers/actors. They make Kelly Johnson's future denizens of the Skunk Works look somewhat antiquated in their pursuit of visionary versions of what can be done with flying machines. One particularly interesting photo is of Mantz's Ford Tri Motor. The center engine has no prop. In fact, the tri motor grazed a telephone pole with the center fuselage engine taking the brunt of the hit. The engine, it's case cracked, it's cylinders hanging together by shreds of metal was a wipe out. There wasn't another

engine available to replace it. If removed, the Ford Tri Motor would be grounded until another was found. The solution was academic. Use the ring cowl, flimsy as it is, to hold the engine cylinders in the case. Take off the prop, it was badly bent anyway and didn't make the Ford look too good with it on. Fly the Tri Motor on only the two outboard engines. Nobody knew the center engine wasn't working and didn't care. The Ford flew just as well on two engines as on three.

A few years later a California Air DC-3 and Mantz's B-25, later used to film Cinerama, met over Van Nuys airport in a grinding crunch as the B-25 sheared off about 18 feet of the DC-3's L/H wing panel. The DC-3 continued on into Burbank to discharge 20 passengers. Mantz's B-25



Ed McAndrews, Jack Pedesky, Pat Smith and Robey Smith at APA 2002 Reunion

landed at Nan Nuys with a badly chewed prop. The loss of 18 feet of wing seemed not to affect the flying capabilities of the DC-3 as the Captain reported he only added a couple degrees of tab. The DC-3 was back flying in 5 days.

The original Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938 creating nonscheduled airline operators was written around people like Paul Mantz, Mantz Air Services and Bob Johnson, Johnson Flying Service of Missoula, Montana. This turned out to be a major oversight the CAB and Air Transport Association spent millions of dollars and 30 years trying to alter, change, eliminate or fold, spindle and bend.

Mantz, Johnson, Scotty O'Carroll of Monarch weren't aviation rebels. They were unique business men of a type and class the airlines should have produced but didn't. They were far superior in their approach to ideas, flight service capabilities and performance than the airlines of that era. They molded tough qualified pilots and proved their aircraft could be stronger and better performers than the factory intended. They made a case for national interest in flying. Mantz's motion picture crews added realism and practicality to motion pictures about flying offering the illusion that anyone with reasonable abilities could do so. Bob Johnson's Flying Service did things all the experts declared impossible and he did day after day and year after year. He proved small dedicated operators are better able to do what government doesn't know how to do, as in the forestry operations. These pioneer "nonskeds" of long ago (well

maybe not that long ago) make the case for a need of less government regulation by strangulation. They were the case why such services should be left in the private sector and government (local, state and federal) restrained competing with such operators.

**Humor...**Why didn't they let the vulture board the airplane? Too much carrion!



Hal Cope and Friend at Superstition Weekend

**COPE NOTE...***DID YOU KNOW?* At the end of WWII there were 724 non-scheduled carriers, 650 of which were active and 99 were operating Lockheed L-18 aircraft or larger. In the late 1940's the safety record of the nonskeds was 14-25 times worse than that of the scheduled industry and today World Airways is the only survivor the entire pack of original nonsked certificates.

*DID YOU KNOW?* That World Airways was founded by Benjamin Pepper in 1948 and operated three ex-PAA B-314 China Clippers offering low fare service between New York and San Juan and between New York and Ireland. Ed Daley purchased World in 1950 and as they say "the rest is history." That "the four horsemen" (Jack Lewin, Red Hart, Jim Fisgrund and Stan Weiss) were denied the right to ever participate in air transportation in the United States after losing their ten year battle with the CAB. That Zantop was formed in 1953 by three brothers Howard, Duane, and Lloyd Zantop. That ONA was founded by George Tompkins in 1946 under the original name of Air Travel which was changed to Calasia Air Transport and finally renamed in 1950 to Overseas National.

*DID YOU KNOW?* That Trans International was founded by Kirk Kerkorian in 1949 as Los Angeles Air Service and was the first nonsked to put turbine powered equipment into service a DC-8 purchased from Delta with financing from Walter Sharp at Bank of America. (I was there.) That Trans International later Transamerica Airlines genealogy dates back to 1945 and AAXIO Airlines and includes All American Airways, Saturn Airways, and Los Angeles Air Services. That Transocean began as Orvis Nelson Air Transport Services in 1946. That Resort Airlines was founded by Clinton Davis and Lewis "Squeaky" Burwell (brother of Clayton L. Burwell Esquire who was president of NACA) and later became Pinehurst

Airlines in 1973. (I served on the Pinehurst Board of Directors for a short period of time.)

*DID YOU KNOW?* That this information and more, much more, on the history of the nonskeds can be found in a book by John T. Coperning entitled "Forgotten Flights Non Scheduled and specialty airlines of the United States 1945-1978. I stumbled across this jewel and immediately ordered a copy for myself. Reading through the history brought back many memories and jogged my old mind on things long ago put aside. I was amused to find my photograph along with Bill Butler and two unrecognized stewardesses in front of the Burbank (now Bob Hope Airport). This wonderful little book will be offered for sale at our reunion April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Sportsman Lodge.

**Obituary...**Lillian Loustau, age 79, passed away on September 5, 2003 in Fairfield, California, after a short illness. She flew for North American Airlines and was chief stewardess for 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Hacienda Airlines. She married John Loustau in 1961 and moved to Fairfield where she was a realtor for 20 years. She and her husband owned and operated Travis Flight Service since 1976.

**Obituary...**Victor J. Hess, age 93, a transportation consultant who was retired from the NTSB passed away September 17, 2003. Hess founded Priority Air Dispatch in 1966 as an air carrier specialized in hauling hazardous materials for NASA and the Department of Defense. After working on an airlift in Cambodia he returned to the U.S. to work for the NTSB as an accident investigator. According to Dick Neumann, Victor Hess was one of the good guys and was helpful to our industry during the non-sked hearings.

**Mail From Cal Beckley...** We have recently lost two flight engineers who were members of APA. They were both exceptional people who spent their adult lives devoted to aviation. I refer to the passing of Bill Short and Herman Weinstein. They worked for Western, Slick, McCulloch and other supplementals. They are sincerely missed.

**Chairman's Message...**Our Reunion Committee has been reinvigorated with the addition of Marge Sorthun, Mary Lou Paulson and Hal Cope. The Committee expends a great deal of time and effort to make each succeeding Annual Reunion a memorable and enjoyable event. As our peer group continues to diminish each year, it becomes even more important for those of us who remain to support the organization by paying dues and attending its functions so that it is possible and practical to continue its operation. Membership Applications and Luncheon Reservation Forms are enclosed with this issue. Until next time. God Bless... Dave Simmons.



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FLYING TIGER LINE LOCKHEED 1049D CONSTELLATION



Photo by Gunther Grondstein (from airliners.net)

AIR AMERICA - MATS CURTISS C-46 COMMANDO



Photo by Mel Lawrence (from airliners.net)